

Wellness Notes

How Can I Help Someone Else Limit or Stop Driving?*

Most drivers monitor themselves and gradually limit or stop driving when they feel that a certain driving situation or driving in general is not safe. However, some people fail to recognize declining abilities, or they fear stopping to drive because it will make them permanently dependent on others for the necessities of life, and it may reduce their social and leisure activities as well. Conditions such as dementia or early stages of Alzheimer's disease may make some drivers unable to evaluate their driving properly.

Step 1 – Assess the situation. See the 15 warning signs in June's Wellness Notes. It will help to personally ride with the person and observe driving habits first hand.

Step 2 – Begin a process of having conversations about driving with the driver. As people age they tend to look first to family members (spouse and children) for candid advice concerning their well-being and health issues. Have conversations early and often. Start the conversation out of a sincere sense of caring for the person's well-being and base it on things you have observed.

Step 3 – Suggest various options, depending on the degree of impairment. **One size does not fit all** and while stopping driving may be the only answer in some cases, stopping driving too early can cause a person's overall health to decline prematurely. Some suggestions are:

- Take a classroom refresher course such as the AARP Driver Safety Program
- Order the AARP Driver Assessment Guide, "Older Driver Skill Assessment and Resource Guide: Creating Mobility Choices."
- Seek additional information from other Web sites on topics such as behind-the-wheel assessment, counseling from private or public sources, remedial training, and/or adaptive equipment from an occupational therapist.
- Limit driving to certain times of day or familiar areas.
- Encourage the driver to consider and gradually begin using other methods of transportation such as rides from family and friends, public transportation, taxis or other public or private transportation options in your community. Accompany the person during initial trials of alternate forms of transportation.
- Contact local motor vehicle office. Your state Department of Motor Vehicles may have programs to evaluate individual driving abilities or may offer special licensing alternatives. Remember, their goal is not to take licenses away, but to help people keep driving as long as they safely can.
- **Step 4** – Seek additional help if necessary. If the person is not taking proper action in response to your concern and the impairment is increasingly obvious, it may be necessary to involve the driver's doctor. (In addition to family members, a family doctor is often the most trusted person for providing advice on health issues that may affect driving.)

Remember driving safely is the ultimate goal.

